



Stratotankers take fuel to the fight, meet milestones while deployed

By Staff Sgt. Shanda De Anda
379th Air Expeditionary Wing public affairs

SOUTHWEST ASIA - After a mere two and a half years as a KC-135 Stratotanker pilot, Capt. Darren Spencer, 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, has surpassed the 150 combat sortie milestone in his career.

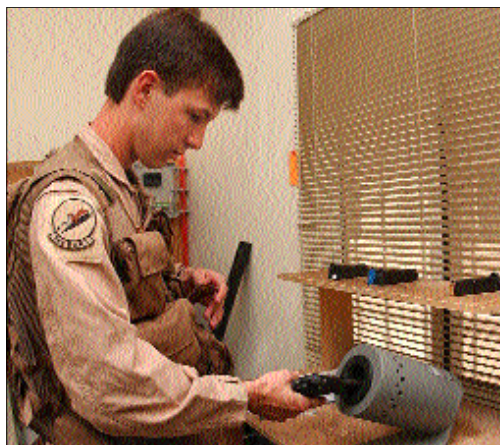


Photo by Airman 1st Class Desiree Hayden

Capt. Darren Spencer, 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron from Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D., clears his weapon prior to a sortie in Southwest Asia.

"(Passing the 150 combat sortie mark) means I'm doing my job," said Captain Spencer. "I'm helping out those who need it directly and indirectly and this is just a personal hallmark for me."

According to the Honolulu native, whose home station is Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D., it's just part of the job and not as uncommon as it may seem.

With seven deployments under his belt so far, typically spending more than 230 days a year away from home, Captain Spencer's situation is quickly becoming the KC-135 aircrew standard. As of May, honoring this commitment has moved back to the forefront.

"Recognizing combat sortie milestones is something that was acknowledged in the past, but fell to the wayside as a tradition until recently," said Lt. Col. Leslie Burns, 340th EARS commander deployed from Grand Forks. "The pace that KC-135 aircrews are keeping has become the standard. We are now flying in areas tankers historically haven't and we're more present in the heart of the battle than we were in the past."

Reaching the 100, 150 and 225 combat sortie milestones are significant events because it represents the amount of time and flying in support of many missions including Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Tanker aircrew support is essential because air frames need in-flight refueling capabilities for endurance and range. They provide commanders

with the capability to keep planes in the air longer and enormous flexibility to successfully prosecute a dynamic air and ground battle."

However, the 340th EARS is eager to share the credit with the entire team.

"The average for a 60-day rotation is 30 sorties," said Staff Sgt. Joe Burdette, 340th EARS aviation resource management deployed from Grand Forks. "And although I play a part in that by dealing with the aircrew flight times, creating flight orders that allow pilots to fly, verifying and tracking pilot qualifications to fly, and keeping track of 30- and 90-day flying times to make sure pilots do not exceed flight hour allowances and advising the deputy; there are a lot of people involved to make these missions possible."

"Among the people who help make these combat sorties happen, besides aircrew, life support, crew comm (managing communications security for flights), schedulers, and boom operators, are the Airmen in maintenance and intelligence," said Lt. Col. Pat Sullivan, 340th EARS KC-135 pilot with more than 75 combat sorties in both the KC-135 and the C-130. "The entire team makes our mission possible; we could not properly execute it without them."

"I'm enormously proud of the contribution my people make every single day and I know our leadership understands the value of those contributions and how important we are to the fight," said Colonel Burns.

Nozzle idea results in \$10,000 for GFAFB Airman

By Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke
Public affairs

It all started while he was observing jets being de-iced. Tech. Sgt. Eric Tilton, of the base's 319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron thought a simple mechanical modification could be helpful throughout the Air Force. With a little prompting from his supervisor, he filled out the forms and submitted his idea. The simple idea led to a \$10,000 award.

To understand the idea you have to understand the problem.

When it comes to de-icing jets, Grand Forks Air Force Base has cornered the market. Last year alone, they de-iced 205 aircraft and used more than 35,574 gallons of de-icing fluid.

That's where Sergeant Tilton comes in. The nozzles on the wing's de-icing trucks are very powerful and get some of the fluid on the ground.

Although the wing's recovery program prevents the fluid from entering the environment, Sergeant Tilton found a piece that could be put inside the nozzle of the sprayer that would reduce the amount of fluid emitted without reducing the amount of water pres-

sure.

After prompting from his supervisor, Sergeant Tilton submitted the improvement to the Innovative Development through Employee Awareness program which rewards individuals who ideas that save time and taxpayer dollars.

"This program allows Airmen to share their ideas with the rest of the Air Force," said Staff Sgt. Jason Johns, base IDEA program manager.

Sergeant Tilton's idea will save the base \$104,724 per year and is pending review for implementation at other bases.

Base targets training

Exercise readies GFAFB Airmen for deployments

By Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke
Public affairs

Recently, many Warriors of the North got a chance to do something they usually do overseas ... deploy and set up a bare base.

The "deployment" was a part of a field training exercise, put on by the base's Mission Support Group.

"The main point of the exercise was to get our Airman on the ground and into the Warrior mindset," said Staff Sgt. Jason Lichau, group exercise coordinator.

Many squadrons in the MSG brought their skills to the exercise; the 319th Security Forces provided weapons familiarization; the 319th Logistics Readiness Squadron conducted Humvee licensing and vehicle-related combat training; the 319th Civil Engineer Squadron instructed on unexploded ordnance procedures, gas mask maintenance and various other ability to survive and operate-related tasks; and the 319th Services Squadron members also got in on the action by using their deployable kitchen to serve lunch.

Even though it was mainly an on-base exercise, other off-base agencies helped out.

"The North Dakota Army National Guard was a tremendous help by loaning us 10 Humvees to train with," said Sergeant Lichau.

The Humvees gave Tech. Sgt. John Baker, 319th Logistics Readiness



Photo by Airman 1st Class SerMae Lampkin

A Communications Squadron Airman aims his M-16 during weapons familiarization training during the recent field training exercise.

Squadron, a chance to show Airmen first-hand the different maintenance required.

"It's imperative that we instill a

Warrior mentality in our Airmen before we deploy them into potential combat zones," said Sergeant Baker.

The medical group was also on hand

to give self-aid and buddy care training and carry out CPR scenarios.

"I think this exercise gives those folks who haven't deployed before a better idea of what to expect," said Sergeant Lichau. "It also gives Airmen skills that could mean the difference between life and death for them or a fellow service-member."

"The MSG mantra is clearly defined by 'expeditionary Airman readiness,' which comes from ensuring all personnel are trained like they fight, both in garrison and at their deployed location," explained Col. Peter Sands, 319th Mission Support Group commander. "We must not take training lightly."



MSG members set up tents in their bare base environment during the exercise.

*Persistence pays off
as base parents,
children enjoy*

Fit Family Fridays

By Senior Airman James Croxon
Public affairs

Sometimes the most extraordinary chain of events brings something great to life.

That happened here recently when the base's Fit Family Fridays program began.

When Airman 1st Class Jessica Riley joined the Air Force, she had aspirations of earning a degree in kinesiology, the mechanics of body movement, and using it in the Air Force. However, she enlisted as an air traffic controller and had to put that dream on hold.

Last fall, she got a little closer to her original goal when she moved from air traffic control to the Health and Wellness Center. With her interest in nutrition, exercise and healthy lifestyles, it seemed a perfect fit.

She fit in so well that shortly after joining the HAWC team she thought up a program to give parents time to exercise while, at the same time, teaching their kids to be active. They could learn about fitness and nutrition. And so, Grand Forks' unique Fit Family Fridays program was born....almost.

"I was apprehensive initially. We had to assure this wonderful idea would not be misconstrued as baby-sitting," said Maj. Paul Smithwick, the HAWC's Health Promotion Manager. "This program would definite fill a need but we had to assure it was legally feasible. Could we do it? If so, it would fill a niche overlooked by mandatory fitness programs offered to our active duty members. The biggest benefit would be helping our community fight America's decade-long trend for becoming obese."

"We worked closely with the legal office and 319th Services Squadron," he said. "It turns out it was legal to work with the children on two conditions: the parent must remain in the building, and the children must be in an educational setting; being given instruction by a certified fitness trainer."

The first condition was met with release forms created by the HAWC and the legal office. Airman Riley met the second criteria by acquiring her



Photo by Senior Airman James Croxon

A base youth scales the climbing wall in the fitness center during a recent Fit Family Friday.

National Certification in Fitness Training," said Major Smithwick. "What can I say? She practices what she preaches. Her enthusiasm is infectious."

To help with this new endeavor, Airman Riley enlisted the aid of volunteers, from throughout the Wing, to instruct, and interact, with the children, giving parents a chance to exercise. Armed with release forms, a volunteer army, and national certifications, Fit Family Fridays began.

"We originally tried the program at Liberty Square but the turnout was dismal," said Airman Riley. "Learning from our first attempt, we revised Fit Family Fridays. We got permission from Mr. James Powell, Director of the Sports and Fitness Center, to use the Fitness Center. He gave us blocks of time on Friday to use for our program. Relocating to the Fitness Center gave the children, and parents, access to more resources than before."

"Airman Riley knocked a home run by taking her

advertisement directly to the source. She made fliers for the school children on base to take home. Our March 4 launch date exceeded everyone's expectations," Major Smithwick noted.

According to Airman Riley, 38 children, and 30 parents, participated that first Friday. Those numbers remained steady during the cold winter months and didn't start to decline until the weather improved these past few weeks. Such a decline was anticipated. People should get outdoors when the weather is great. Even now we are still averaging 15 children as this event draws to a close.

The program also got the attention of other bases during a recent Health Promotion Conference at McChord AFB. "The attendees were excited about it," said Major Smithwick. "It has been wildly successful and continues to impress everyone."

"This program is like a dream come true," said Airman Riley.